A

# LETTER,

About the Present State of *Christianity*, among the Christianized

# INDIANS

OF

# NEW-ENGLAND.

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Written,

To the HONOURABLE,

## Sir William Ashhurst,

GOVERNOUR of the Corporation, for Propagating the GOSPEL among the Indians, in *New-England*, and Parts Adjacent, in *America*.

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*Boston*, in *N. E.* Printed by *Timothy Green*.
1708.

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from the Town Sage of Groton,

among the Christianized

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# A LETTER,

## To the Honourable,

## Sir *WILLIAM ASHHURST*,

## About the Present State of *Christianity*, among the *Christianized* Indians, of *New-England*.

SIR,

THE last Letter wherewith you Honoured us, Dated in *August*, gives us to understand, how Acceptable it would be, to receive a fresh and late Account, of the *Progress made in Evangelizing the poor Salvages in this Country*: And we shall, as under all the Obligations imaginable to do it, Endeavour your satisfaction in a Point so worthy to be Enquird after; hoping that our Account may as *Good News from a far Country*, prove no ungrateful Entertainment.

In the *Magnalia Christi Americana*, or, History of *New-England*, Published at *London*, Two or Three Years ago, there is, The *Life* of our Memorable ELIOT; In which there is a Letter to

Dr. *Leusden*, a Professor at *Utrecht*, relating the Success of the Gospel among our *Americans*; and a full Commentary upon every Article of that Letter, declaring *Who* were Employ'd in that noble work, and *How* they managed it. And in another part of that Book, there is a long Chapter, Entituled, *The Triumphs of Grace, or, A Narrative of the Success which the Gospel has had among the* Indians *of New-England*; a Narrative, as well Attested as it is Remarkable. We shall not now Transcribe any Paragraphs of that History; because tis easy to have recourse unto it. But they that would insinuate, as if the People of our Profession, in *America*, (who are for Embracing & Diffusing, the Holy Religion of Christ, in the *Original Purity* wherein His Gospel has given it unto us, without Humane Additions and Inventions) did nothing to Propagate the Religion we Profess, will there find a sufficient Confutation.

We will now proceed, where that History leaves off; and lay before your Honour, the present Circumstances of the *Evangelical Work* among our *Indians*.

There were in the Southern parts of this Province, about Four or Five Years ago, (when your Commissioners here sent a Couple of English Ministers, who were Masters of the Indian Tongue, to visit them,) no less than *Thirty several Congregations* of *Indians*, who commonly Assembled every *Lords Day*, and a great part of them to

*Lectures*

*Lectures* on other Dayes also, for the Worship of the Great GOD, and our Lord JESUS CHRIST. We cannot understand, That the Number of the Congregations, is considerably altered from what it was, when the Gentlemen, who then Examined their Condition, brought us that Report of them.

Indeed, the Number of *Indians* in this Land, is not Comparable to what it was Fifty Years ago. The Hand of God, has very strangely wasted them; and the *War* which they began upon the English in the Year, 1675. hastened a strange Desolation upon whole Nations of them. Almost all that remain under the Influences of the English in this *Massachuset* Province are so far Christianized, as that they Believe there is a God, and but One God, and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World. Mr. *Experience Mayhew*, who is Grandson, to the Old Gentleman that first Instructed the Indians on *Martha's Vineyard*, and like his Grandfather, a Laborious Teacher among them, informs us; That there are about One Hundred and Four-Score Families of *Indians* on that Island; and that of these there are no more than Two Persons, which now remain in their Paganism. He is at this Time, gathering another Church of *Indians*, whereof he is himself to be the *Pastor*.

In the Indian Congregations, there were, at the Time of our last Visitation, (which we said, was about Four or Five Years ago,) about

*Thirty*

*Thirty Seven* Indians, who were the constant Preachers of the Gospel unto them, in their own Language; In which they have *Catechisms*, and *Bibles*, and *Psalm-books*, and other Books of Piety; Translated by the vast Labours of worthy English-men.

Besides these, there are Seven or Eight *English Ministers*, who have Learn'd the *Indian* Tongue, and Visit the *Indian* Assemblies, and *Pray*, and *Preach* among them, and give such Directions, as they see needful for their Affairs. The *Indian* Ministers, very frequently apply themselves to these *English* ones, for their Advice, about Instructing their Flocks under their Charge. And some of the *English* Preachers, do constantly spend every *Lords Day*, with the *Indian* Assemblies; having taken the Charge of them.

How the Ordinary Congregations among the *Indians* are inclined, and how instructed, may be a little apprehended, from some Lines in a Letter, now lying before us, Dated not many Weeks ago, from a very Valuable Servant of God, namely, Mr. *Samuel Danforth*. He sayes; 'They 'met me at *Little Compton* about two Months 'since, to hear me Preach; Had you been there 'with me to see, how well they fill'd up the *Seats*; 'with what *Gravity* they behaved themselves; 'what *Attention* they gave; what *Affection* they 'shew'd; how powerfully *Pawquachoise* [an In-'dian,] Pray'd; (for I put him upon it, to

'*Pray*,

'*Pray*, having never before heard him *Pray*, and 'being willing to have some Trial of his Abili-'ties, in order to his Approbation for Office ;) 'how melodiously *Jonathan George* [ another In-'dian ] set the Tune for the *Psalms*, and carried it 'out ; and how dexterously the Young Lads of 'Twelve Years old, could turn to the *Proofs* thro' 'out the Sermon ; and how Thankful they were 'to me at the last, that I would take so much 'Pains, as to come so far from home, to Preach 'to them ; I am sure, you would have been much 'affected with it.

Tho' there are some Congregations of the *Indians*, which are not Advanced unto all the Privi-ledges of the Evangelical *Church-State*, Combining for, and Enjoying of, *all special Ordinances* ; yet a considerable Number of them are so. Some *New Churches* have been lately form'd, and fill'd ; and more will quickly be Gathered. They have *Pastors* and *Elders* of their own ; *Ordained*, some times by the Hands of *English* Ministers, and sometimes by the Hands of *Indian* Ministers, in the presence of the English ; all after the solemn English manner. And by *Admonitions*, and *Ex-communications*, Publickly dispensed, they proceed against Scandalous Offendors, when any such are found among them.

We shall here insert, an Extract of a late Letter, from Mr. *Josiah Torrey*, an hopeful Young Man, who has Learned the Indian Tongue, and begins

begins to Preach to them in their own Language. He having been an Eye-witness of their proceedings, writes to us in words following.

'Their Gravity, and diligent Attendance in 'the Time of Worship, with the affectionate Confessions of such as are Admitted into the Church, 'make me hope, that many of them may have 'the work of the Spirit wrought in them, *according to the working of the mighty Power of God.* 'Their method, respecting those that are Admitted into their Church Communion, is more according to the manner of the Churches in the 'Primitive Times, than is now practised among 'the Churches in most parts. The person to be 'Admitted, stands forth, in the midst of the 'Assembly; and first makes Declaration of his '*Knowledge*, and sometimes desires Informations 'in Things more arduous and doubtful. And then, 'he makes a *Confession of Sin*; which they do, '(as I have seen,) with *Tears* and *Trembling*, 'like him in the *Sixteenth* Chapter of the *Acts*. 'And then, he gives an Account of *Experiences* he 'has had, of Convictions, Awakenings, and 'Comforts, in which they are large and particular. 'After which, (much Counsel and Exhortation, 'to remain stedfast in the *Faith* and *Ways* of 'the Lord, being given them, by their *Pastor* and '*Elder*, they are Admitted. I would (and not 'ungroundedly) hope, That *Additions* are *made* '*unto the Church daily of such as shall be Saved.*

'There

'There are many, which maintain a Christian 'Conversation, and are to be accounted, not '*Almost*, but *Altogether Christians*. And this does 'Encourage the Preaching of the Gospel to them, 'when we see, it pleases God, to make it *His* '*Power unto Salvation*.

About the *Manner* of performing the more *Stated Exercises* of Religion, in Publick, among the *Indians*, there needs no Account but this; They are Conformed unto the *English*. But we have now before us, a Letter very lately received, from as knowing and as faithful a Person as could be Enquired of, wherein he speaks a little more particularly.

He sayes; 'You may Remember, That your 'self, with some others, were pleased once to 'bear me Company, to a Lecture at *Assawampset*, 'and were an Eye-witness, of their Grave, Seri-'ous, Attentive Deportment, in their Exer-'cises, and of their Excellent *Singing of Psalms*, 'with most ravishing Melody. They begin their 'Exercises with *Prayer*; Then Sing a *Psalm*; 'Then *Preach*; and so Conclude with *Prayer*. 'The Administration of *Sacraments* among them, 'is like *Ours*, and as they were taught by their 'Apostle ELIOT. His Name is of wonderful 'Authority among them; and the Rules he gave 'them, for the Form of *Marriages* among them, 'and for *Admonitions* and *Excommunications* in 'their Churches, are not to be found fault with

'by any, but it will provoke them. Not long 'since, an *Indian* Lodg'd at an *English mans* House 'one Night; and the next Day he visited me, 'and ask'd, *Why the man at whose House he Lodg'd, 'did not Pray in his Family?* Seeing that 'Mr. *Eliot* taught the *Indians* to do it every Day, 'Morning and Evening: he thought it strange, 'that the *English* should direct them to *Pray in 'their Families*, and yet not do it themselves. 'But at last, he entertained the *Distinction*; That 'there were *Matchet* English men, as well as '*Matchet* Indians; and that some *English* did not 'practise, as they had been taught to do. '[ *Matchet*; that is to say, Naughty, or Wicked. ]

The same Gentleman, thus proceeds in that Letter.

'To your last Enquiry, *What I think there may 'be of Piety among them?* Sir, I think, that there 'were many of the Old Generation, who were 'instructed by the Reverend ELIOT, and others, 'which *Died in the Lord*; and the *First Fruits* of 'them are in Heaven, as an *Earnest* of more to 'follow. I think, the *Censorious English* among 'us, are not to be the *Rule for our Charity* about 'them: Yet let me say; I could never yet En'quire of any Plantation, or Assembly of *Indians*, 'but the most *Censorious English* would grant, 'There were *Three* or *Four* Persons in that Plan'tation, who, they verily believed, were *Sound*

'*Christians*

'*Christians*, tho' they Condemned the rest, 'Whereas a *Charitable* man, would have reckon'd 'these *Three* or *Four*, to have been the most *Eminent for Piety* among them; and have granted 'the rest, to have such a measure of *Knowledge* 'in the Gospel-method of Salvation, and to be so 'ready to submit with most admirable *Patience* 'to the *Church Censures* among them, and so '*Penitent* in their Confessions of their Faults, and '*Fearful* afterwards of Relapsing into the same 'or like Faults; as might be a just Foundation 'to hope, That they are Travelling the right 'way to Heaven.

The *Frenchified Indians* in the Eastern parts of this Province, have by their long Wars upon us, denied us an Opportunity to *Christianize* them. While Sir *William Phips* was our Governour, we had One Years Peace with those Indians; And in that Year, we furnished the Governour, with a Preacher, to carry the offer of the Gospel unto them. But while the Preacher was preparing for his Journey, they perfidiously broke out into New Hostilities; by which our Attempt was then defeated. When the Earl of *Bellomont* became our Governour, we had a longer lucid Interval of Peace with them. In this time, there came several of their Chief men to *Boston*, whom the Governour sent unto one of us, to be discoursed about matters of Religion. When they were

 told;

told; *That they ought to Worship none but that God, who made Heaven and Earth*, and, *That the Worship of Graven Images, Crucifixes, the Virgin* Mary, *and other Saints, was displeasing to the Great and only True God*; they stood like men amaz'd; they replied not a word. They were then told, *That we would send Ministers unto them, who should instruct them in the true way to Eternal Life, if they would receive them*: Whereupon they declared, They were not willing that any should be sent unto them. The *French Priests* have made them, rather *twice more the Children of Hell*, (more averse to true *Christianity*,) than while they were meer *Pagans*. Yet we gave not over. We found our Applications to *English Preachers* ineffectual; we applied our selves unto *Indian Preachers*, in hopes, that some such might be prevailed withal, to run the desperate Hazards of carrying the Gospel unto that *Foolish people*, and imparting to them the Oracles which might make them *Wise unto Salvation*. But while we were prosecuting this Design, they treacherously and barbarously murdered near an Hundred of our Peo- who, upon the Faith of a *Peace*, which they had just before Sworn to, were Lovingly treating them in their Houses; and Commenced that grievous and bloody *War*, which is not yet ended.

We have heretofore been at considerable Expences, to Encourage the Essayes of Good men,

to

to Christianize the *Mohegin* Indians, in the Colony of *Connecticut*. But they have been Obstinate in their Paganism; and their Obstinacy has put a stop at present unto our Endeavours; which yet we will Revive, as soon and as well as we can.

A most Exemplary *Indian Minister*, whose Name is *Japhet*, has of late made several Visits among his Countrey men the *Pagan Indians*, about the *Narragansett* Countrey; and God has Crown'd his Endeavours with considerable Successes. We Resolve to give him all possible Encouragement.

We have left no Stone unturned, that we might obtain some Able and Faithful *Missionaries*, for the *Five Nations*, that are some Hundreds of Miles distant from us, to the Westward. All that we have hitherto accomplished, is, That we have Supported and Rewarded (and at this Day continue to do so,) the Pains of several *Dutch* Ministers, who proceed as far as they can, in Communicating the Knowledge of GOD and CHRIST, unto those distant Salvages. And of late, they have seen some desirable Successes of their Ministry.

The main Support, that we have had for the Expensive part of this Work, has been from the Revenues, remitted hither, by the Honourable *Corporation, for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians*, But then, the Liberality of Pious men.

among

among our selves has also been Employ'd this way, upon multiplied occasions. Particular Gentlemen in this Countrey, have often *Devised Liberal Things*, to promote Christianity among the *Indians*. Besides many other Expressions of Charity towards them, given by others, we ought not to leave unmentioned, the *Meeting-House*, which Mr. *Samuel Sewall*, ( the Secretary to your Commissioners here ) has Built for them; and the Books, the Publishing and Scattering of which *Mr. Edward Bromfield*, ( another of your Commissioners ) has more than once procured to Fortify them against their Peculiar Temptations, and Enlighten them in the Mysteries of God.

The Studies of your *Commissioners*, are now Engaging more Particularly, upon the Intentions, of bringing the *Indians* into the most *Compact* and *English* Circumstances, that can be Proposed. But this must be a work of Time; and in the mean time, tho' we could wish the Evangelical Work among the *Indians* had less Difficulties to Clog it, yet we have Reason to be glad, that so much of Christianity and Prosperity does attend it, as there does.

As the Conversion of the *Natives* to our Holy Religion, was One Special Thing propounded, by those Good Men that first Planted this Countrey, when a wast and vast Wilderness; so the Salvation of the many *Natives* that have

been

been here Converted unto God, has been richly worth all the Pains and Costs therein Expended.

We render to Your Honour, and to the Honourable Corporation, our most grateful Acknowledgments of all Your Pious Care, to forward a Work, wherein the Name of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and the Weal of many Souls, are so greatly Concerned: Recommending You to the Divine Favour, we Subscribe,

SIR,

Yours to Honour and Serve;

*Boston, N.E.*
*March* 2.
1704, 5.

Increase Mather.
Cotton Mather.
Nehemiah Walter.